

LESSING'S FAUST.

SATAN (*to a SPIRIT*).

SPEAK thou the first. Relate what thou hast performed.

FIRST SPIRIT.

Satan ! I saw a cloud in the heavens ; it carried destruction in its womb. I swooped upon it ; hid myself in its deepest darkness, and guided its course ; and stayed it over the hut of a poor and virtuous man, who was sinking into his first slumber in the arms of his wife. Here I rent the cloud, and shook out its fire in flakes upon the hut, and all that the wretches possessed was its prey. Satan, this was all I could. For himself,

his weeping children, his wife, these the angel of the Lord bore out of the flame; and, as I saw him, I fled.

SATAN.

Coward and fool! and thou sayest it was the hut of a poor, of a virtuous man?

SPIRIT.

Even so, Satan. Now is he naked, and bare, and lost.

SATAN.

For us: yes, that is he, and for ever! Take from the rich his treasure, that he may despair; shake it out on the hearth of the poor, that it may lead his heart astray: thus we win a double prize! To make poorer him who is already poor binds him still faster to his God. Speak, thou second spirit! tell me a better tale.

SECOND SPIRIT.

Satan, I can! I went over the sea, and I sought me out a storm with which I might destroy; and I found one.—As I swept right on to the shore, I looked down and saw a fleet, and there were traders on board, usurers

and defrauders. Their yells and curses reached my ear: down I plunged with my whirlwind into the abyss, and up again I shot on the foam towards Heaven.

SATAN.

And drownedst them?

SECOND SPIRIT.

So that none escaped. Their souls are now thine!

SATAN.

Traitor! they were so before. Had they lived, they would have inflicted heavier curses and destruction on the earth; would have robbed, and murdered, and violated on other coasts; would have transported, from clime to clime, new temptations to sin. And all this is now lost. Oh! you should be sent back to hell! You do but disturb my government.—Speak, thou, the third. Hast thou to do with storms and whirlwinds?

The third Spirit narrates, that he has snatched from the lips of a sleeping girl the first kiss that had ever been printed on them, and thrown the first shade of pollution over the purity of her mind.

SATAN (*replies*).

'Tis well; there is forethought and speculation in thy deed. Poor spirits! who breathe corruption on material substance: this one does better, he corrupts the soul. Say on, thou fourth! what hast thou performed?

FOURTH SPIRIT.

Satan, nothing! But I have conceived a conception which, could it be realised in deed, would cause all other deeds to shrink in comparison.

SATAN.

What is it?

FOURTH SPIRIT.

To rob the Deity of his favourite: a thoughtful, solitary youth, totally given up to the search after wisdom; breathing and feeling alone for this; renouncing every passion but this one for wisdom; dangerous to you and to all of us, should he once become a teacher of the people—to gain him from Heaven, Satan—

SATAN.

Excellent! admirable! and your plan?

FOURTH SPIRIT.

See, I gnash my teeth! I have no plan! I have slunk about his soul on every side; but I found no single weakness on which to fix my hold.

SATAN.

Fool! has he not desire of knowledge?

FOURTH SPIRIT.

More than any mortal beside.

SATAN.

Then leave him to me; that is enough for his perdition.

With these words Satan concludes the scene; but, as the infernal ministers depart, the voice of the Angel of Prescience, *der ursehung*, is heard from above—

Ye shall not prevail!

Faust himself is thrown, by angelic agency, into a deep slumber, and a phantom is put in his place, on which the devil exercises his ingenuity in vain. Faust sees, in a dream, the progress of these temptations, and wakes more confirmed in virtue than ever.